



IOWA RECOVERY TIMES

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**Safer, Stronger,
Smarter**

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Four Flood Seminars Examine 2008 Floods and How Iowa Can Better Plan and Prepare for Future Flooding

The University of Iowa Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research has added four community flood seminar dates across Iowa beginning Sept. 7 and ending Sept. 30. The seminars have been planned in response to requests from more Iowa communities following five seminars during June and July. The seminars are designed to help people better understand the 2008 Iowa floods and how Iowa residents, as well as local, regional and state

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Joe Bolkcom with the University of Iowa Center for Global and Environmental Research discusses Iowa's continued flooding problems at a Flood Seminar held in Burlington.

Lou Gehrig's Disease Doesn't Stop Volunteer

Volunteering in flood recovery is not so much work as it is therapy to Steve Thomas of Cedar Rapids, a recent winner of the Rebuild Iowa Award for Service.

In the two years since the record-setting floods of 2008, Thomas has been a full-time flood recovery volunteer, gutting and rebuilding flood-damaged homes in the Cedar Rapids area through the Hands On organization and then with AmeriCorps. With the recent heavy rains and flooding this spring, Thomas is

continuing his mission by volunteering with AmeriCorps VISTA in the Manchester and Lake Delhi areas, where more than 200 homes were damaged by the breach of the Lake Delhi dam.

What makes Thomas's volunteer work even more remarkable is that in June 2008, the same month a devastating flood hit his hometown, Thomas was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, also called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. ALS is a disease of the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord

that control voluntary muscle movement. However, Thomas doesn't let the disease get in the way of his goal to help others.

"I'm going to stick with doing recovery work as long as I can. My legs are getting weaker, and I'm losing some strength of my arms, but I want to do the best I can," Thomas said. "I have to seize the day. I don't know what will happen, but I want to make every day count."

Thomas believes the recovery work helps him
(Continued on page 2)

Governor Culver Urges Iowans to Apply for Disaster Assistance

Many communities across the state have been affected by recent flooding this spring and summer. Although the RIO focuses specifically on recovery from the 2008 disasters and is not involved in the direct recovery from this summer's events, the RIO is assisting other agencies in issuing important information for Iowans.

Governor Chet Culver is urging Iowa homeowners, businesses and individuals affected by severe weather and flooding to register for state and federal flood assistance.

Federal Assistance - A Presidential Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance has been issued for the following 32 counties: Black Hawk, Cherokee, Clayton, Decatur, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Franklin, Hamilton, Howard, Humboldt, Ida, Jackson, Jasper, Jones, Kossuth, Lee, Lucas, Lyon, Mahaska, Marion, O'Brien, Osceola, Polk, Ringgold, Sioux, Story, Taylor, Union, Warren, Webster, and Wright.

Residents and business owners who sustained losses in these counties may immediately begin registering for

assistance online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or **1-800-462-7585 (TTY)** for the hearing and speech impaired. The toll-free telephone numbers will operate from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. (local time).

Individual Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

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VOLUNTEER *(continued from page 1)*

focus his life on what he can do to assist people in need. His commitment to helping people is an extension of his pre-disaster job as a physical therapist, a job he gave up because of the effects of the disease.

Jimmy Kelly, now a unit leader with the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps out of Vinton, has worked with Thomas for two years through AmeriCorps and calls him a reluctant hero. "Anytime he is recognized for what he has done, he is quick to point out other people who have done more. With Steve, it's more than just the physical presence of being there," Kelly said. "His attitude makes all the difference. He made me feel more connected to the Cedar Rapids community. He spent his whole life trying to put people back together as a physical therapist, and now he fixes up people's houses."

Whether its disaster recovery, or dealing with ALS, Thomas continues working and moving forward, say his friends. Now, he's helping people in Delaware County do the same thing.

"There is a great need up here. People's homes have been ruined," Thomas said. "There are so many



RIO Executive Director Lt. Gen. Ron Dardis presents the Rebuild Iowa Award for Service to Steve Thomas.

small communities down river, and the ones I've been in were just trashed by the flooding. It brings back a lot of memories from 2008, not only gutting a house, but dealing with the emotion and trauma of the people affected."

Dawn Novak of Marion, who worked with Thomas when he was a physical therapist, nominated him for the Rebuild Iowa award. "He is the most humble man I ever met," she said. "He thinks everyone who does good deserves to be recognized more than

he does, but I don't know anyone who has worked as hard as he does to help others."

Thomas was presented the Rebuild Iowa Award for Service by Lt. Gen. Ron Dardis, executive director of the Rebuild Iowa Office, during a Cedar Rapids City Council meeting on July 27. He was one of nine individuals and organizations in Iowa receiving the award for exemplary work in Iowa's recovery from the 2008 floods and tornadoes.

Message from RIO Executive Director: Iowa Must Take Action Now to Minimize Flood Risk

Yet another round of increased precipitation and flooding this summer reminds us more must be done to minimize future flood risk in Iowa.

In 2008, tornadoes and widespread flooding resulted in the largest disaster in Iowa's history. More than 40,000 Iowans were directly impacted by the disasters. Statewide losses were estimated between \$8 and \$10 billion with 85 of Iowa's 99 counties receiving a presidential disaster declaration. To this day, the disaster remains one of the biggest disasters in U.S. history when calculating damage to public infrastructure and utilities.

The Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) was established as a temporary state agency to coordinate the state's 2008 disaster recovery efforts and identify ways to leave Iowa safer, stronger and better prepared for future disasters. This summer's flooding reminds us that we must remain vigilant to ensure this charge is met.

Immediately after the disasters, the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission incorporated input from thousands of Iowans to outline 12 overarching recommendations for long-term recovery, identifying everything from housing to case management to floodplain management and regional planning. The Iowa Legislature has taken steps to address every one of these recommendations, but work still remains, especially in reducing future flood risk. Comprehensive watershed and floodplain management and mitigation of flood risk

must be a top priority for Iowa's leaders.

Unfortunately, many of these recommendations have been heard before. After the 1993 floods in Iowa, the [Iowa Flood Disaster Report](#) included the following among its recommendations:

Iowa could benefit from an expanded, comprehensive, and fully integrated floodplain management program...

The State of Iowa should review the floodplain management responsibility within the state and revise necessary laws to create a viable, effective program with adequate resources.

These recommendations were not acted upon in the aftermath of the 1993 floods. Similarly, a White House committee issued its own set of federal recommendations which saw no serious consideration at the time.

Since those state and federal reports were published, Iowa has received 13 presidential disaster declarations for flooding, and the state is projected to receive increased precipitation in the coming years. We cannot allow ourselves to once again forget the lessons we have learned. We must take action now to find solutions that will mitigate future flood damage to homes, farms, businesses, communities and our state.

Remember, it's not a matter of "if" the next disaster will strike, but "when."

*Lieutenant General Ron Dardis
Rebuild Iowa Office Executive Director*

"We must take action now to find solutions that will mitigate future flood damage to homes, farms, businesses, communities and our state."

*-Lt. Gen. Ron Dardis,
RIO Executive Director*

Third Round of Single Family New Construction Program Announced

The Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) has launched a third round of funding for the Single Family New Construction Program totaling \$25 million. Participating cities and Councils of Government (COGs) will solicit proposals from developers in the 2008 flood impacted areas. IDED will accept proposals for the program from the cities and COGs through Oct. 15.

To date, Iowa's Single Family New Construction Program has resulted in 350 housing units completed or under construction, and another 495 units planned for the months ahead. A total of \$48 million has been allocated or spent through the first two rounds of the program.

The Rebuild Iowa Office



The Rebuild Iowa Office is tasked with ensuring that the state rebuilds safer, stronger and smarter than before the 2008 disasters. The RIO is supported by a professional staff made up of existing state employees and hired full-time staff to allow it to achieve its mission, vision, goals and objectives. Throughout its initiatives, the RIO is committed to a recovery and rebuilding process that is fair and equitable to everyone.

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2010 FLOODS (continued from page 2)

State Assistance - Disaster-affected residents in the following 21 state-declared counties may register for state Individual Assistance from storms in June, July and August, 2010: Appanoose, Boone, Buchanan, Buena Vista, Butler, Calhoun, Clay, Davis, Dickinson, Emmet, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Keokuk, Monona, Monroe, Palo Alto, Shelby, Van Buren, Wapello, and Washington.

Individuals in these counties should call

the State Individual Assistance Program at 1-866-434-4692 or visit www.dhs.iowa.gov and click on the Storm Help link.

In addition, agricultural producers who sustained losses from recent flooding and severe weather may be eligible to apply or assistance through their local Farm Service Agency office. Visit www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA and select the State Offices link at the top of the page for more information.

FLOOD SEMINARS (continued from page 1)

leaders can better plan and prepare for future flooding.

The events, which are free to the public, are titled "Anatomy of Iowa Floods: Preparing for the Future," and will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. in Elkader, Cherokee, Red Oak and at Honey Creek State Park. Topics to be covered include trends in Iowa precipitation; trends in stormwater run-off; work of the Iowa Flood Center; floodplain management strategies; water quality; the Cedar Falls Floodplain Initiative; rural-urban watershed coalition building; and a review of related state public policy issues. The presentations will be followed by a question and answer session.

Following each seminar, refreshments will be served and a limited number of free copies of the book, "A Watershed Year: Anatomy of the Iowa Floods of 2008," will be available to attendees.

The seminars are being hosted by the

University of Iowa Center for Global & Regional Environmental Research, Rebuild Iowa Office, Iowa Flood Center, University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension, Iowa League of Cities and the Iowa State Association of Counties.

Flood Seminar Schedule, 4 to 6 p.m.

- Tuesday, Sept. 7 – FreedomBank Community Room, Elkader
- Tuesday, Sept. 14 – Western Iowa Community College, Cherokee
- Tuesday, Sept. 21 – Montgomery County Historical Society building, Red Oak
- Thursday, Sept. 30 – Honey Creek Resort State Park, rural Moravia on Lake Rathbun

Clip & Save...**Iowa Disaster Recovery Contacts**

Rebuild Iowa Office (www.rio.iowa.gov)	866.849.0323
Ticket to Hope crisis counseling (www.tickettohope.org)	800.447.1985 (the Iowa Concern Hotline)
Iowa Mortgage Help (www.IowaMortgageHelp.com)	877.622.4866
National Flood Insurance Program (www.floodsmart.gov)	888.379.9531
Federal Emergency Management Agency (www.fema.gov)	800.621.FEMA (3362)
TTY for hearing/speech impaired	800.462.7585
U.S. Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov)	800.659.2955